

Loop for Project Homecoming

Loops is at the core of a game, as they represent the repeatable actions that facilitates the playful activity and progress through the game. So the loop is provided to cause the player to use mechanics to do certain actions.

When design loop where any kind of user are to take an action connected to a medium, it is important to understand what thoughts the user are having when he/she uses the action to interact with the medium. Don Norman divides these into two gulfs, one of execution and one of evaluation. Execution is where the user tries to figure out how the medium is operated, while evaluation is trying to figuring out what happened and determining how well their expectations from execution were met. To properly design for this, the design has to bind these two through so called bridges. The more

With this in mind we created the loop that be seen on figure 1. The core loop of the game should make the player progress through the game by exploring the game world. At times, events would arise that requires the player to make a choice. The choice should not be obvious, but the outcome should be logical, so the player could mostly blame himself for the outcome. The outcome should be used to further evaluation of where to explore next. The intended play experience was to make the players feeling they are struggling to get through and trying to make the best out of bad situations through the choices. The exact narration is not locked to the loop, but we went on with the idea of being a squad in the jungle during the Vietnam War.

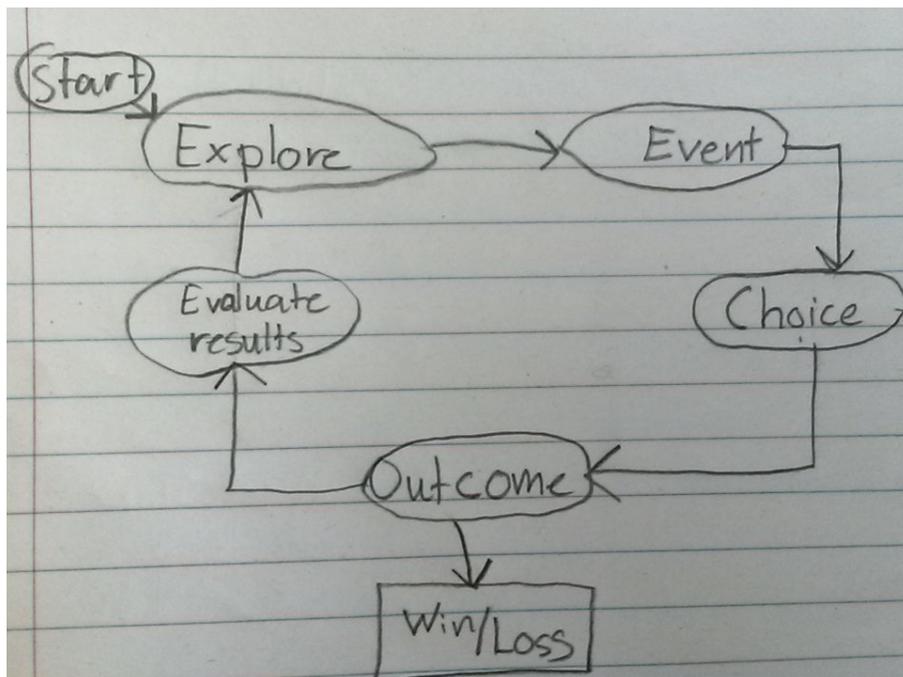


Figure 1: The core loop

For our play experience, the bridging between the different gulf were of uttermost importance. If the gulf of evaluation would not satisfy the expectation from the gulf of execution, it will ruin the play experience. One thing is that it will become frustrating if the bridging is not designed to guide the user, another is that if the two gulf are not in

compliance with each other, idea of the logical outcome will fail and creating indifference about the choices and the outcome as players would not feel they were in control.

As for control, we had to be very careful when designing with the space of possibility in mind. The player should feel like they were struggling and to follow the narration, we wanted to keep some of the information in Black Box. One example is that we did not want to show the percentage of health each unit. Showing could have tampered with the experience of being a squad in the war, as you could easily see how damage each soldier took from certain. This would make theorycrafting too easy and allow for extreme optimal usage of soldiers health pool, which is not part of the intended play experience as it puts the player in too controlling position. However, there should still be enough information regard resources to make the optimal choices, and they should be able to learn from their actions to expand their repertoire within the game. Therefore we introduced the idea concept of representing the units status through lines of text. In this way, people still expand their knowledge of them gameworld, and allow theorycrafting, but not in a way that would translate the whole play experience into numbers.

While the idea of designing the loops through the theories of Norman with considerations of space of possibility, we never confirmed our idea during the design phase. The problem with the loop was that it was never fully tested, before the digital implementation started. There were too large a focus on making it into a game, which lead us astray and results in less focus on the play experience. As soon as it became a game, it required much more resource to redesign a certain implementation. Earlier testing of the play experience could have provided a better framework for design the play experience. As the game is closely resembling a board game we could have taken further advantage of the paper prototype design for testing the loop. Alteration at this stage would have been much easier to design and implement, and would have caught onto some of the errors we found later in the process.